Understanding Dynamics of Author- Reader Relationship through Digital Literature

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Introduction

Today's technology is bringing change in the concept of authorship by multiplying endless access and distribution of literary work on digital platforms (Velagićand and Hasenay, 2013). It has brought the change in which literature is created and consumed across digital platforms.This advancement challenges the traditional concept of author and authorship by creating multisensory experience for the reader through flash fiction, social connectivity, digital interactivity and multimedia as well (Rahmeh, 2023). Blurring the lines between authorship and readers.

Traditionally, the concept of author is seen as “an individual who is the sole creator of unique ‘works’ the originality of which warrants their protection under laws of intellectual property” (Woodmansee 1994, p.15).This means that the earlier understanding of authorship is seen from two perspectives: originality and individuality of literary works accompanied by printing culture. This concept of authorship can be redefined from the subject of technology.

Mark Poster in his work on “The Digital Subject and Cultural Theory” (2000) claims the difference between an analogue author and digital author. An Analogue author is defined “by printing culture” whereas a digital author is defined by “web environment” and “networked authorship” (p. 490). Thus, the rise of technology influences the present time concept of authorship.

Digital platforms provide features such as comments, votes, hashtags, hyperlinks, which accelerate author reader interactivity, blurring literary genre (Vermeulen and van den Akker, 2010). The 21st century witnessed endless literary crowdsourced projects which has set the trend of participatory culture in the area of literature. In this both readers and writers as digital communities were involved in different ways of generating literature as per subjectivities of projects (Kuusela, 2018). These practices challenge the traditional conviction of authorship, suggesting a need to redefine authorship in the digital age by considering online reading and writing practices on various crowdsourced digital platforms. (Moharana)The emergence of digital use has brought changes in the traditional notion of authorship as well as readership. The digital literature witnesses the participatory pattern which focuses on interaction and collaboration.

This research study aims to use reader response theory as a way to understand and analyze the impact of readers' proximity to the author and its writings and a subsequent change in the dynamics of authorship.

Introduction to the Author and the Works

This research aims to redefine the concept of authorship in the digital age by studying how authorship is evolving on digital platforms named “Reddit” & “Medium” through author and reader interactions. Both platforms provide space for writers and readers to share their content using different digital interactivities.

Reddit is a community based crowdsourced platform which has its own subreddits (set of communities) with their own rules of writing. The identity of authors and readers most of the time is anonymous. The content variety on this platform is mostly text posts, articles, blogs, poems, stories, links and discussions as well. The visibility of the content depends upon upvotes, claps and comments.

Medium is an individual profile based crowdsourced platform. The identity of authors and readers most of the time is not anonymous. The content variety on this platform is mostly articles, blogs, poems and stories. The visibility of the content depends upon audience interaction through comments and claps, sometimes a reader in order to read the whole content may require premium features.

In this research two poems and two stories are taken as a primary source which have reader interactivity with the work of authors.

The Dalek Emperor by Barrosca (2015) on Reddit platform under the r/nosleep community (for sharing scary personal experience). It is a series of horror narratives consisting of four parts. The story revolves around the disappearance of a young girl by a group of friends in a town.

Has anyone heard of the Left/Right Game? by Neon Tempo (2017) on Reddit platform under the r/nosleep community (for sharing scary personal experience). It is a transcript of a woman who joins a road trip game, which involves as per instructions taking a turn either left or right, resulting in a dangerous reality. The whole story is presented in a series of horror narratives consisting of ten parts.

How to Get Your Goodbyes Right by Livid-Effective1679 (2023) on Reddit platform under the r/OC Poetry community (for sharing published poems). The poet talks about how while handling grief one can say goodbye.

She wrote Me Kindly, Wrong by Secret_World_9742 (2025) on Reddit platform under the r/OC Poetry community (for sharing published poems). The poet talks about past conflicts of misremembered.

Every Relationship Is Like This by Priya (2016) on the Medium platform. It is a story about experiencing highs and lows in relationships.

I miss the internet by Joan Westenberg (2023) on the medium platform. It is a first person narrative of how the internet has changed the world late in the 2000s.

Is it too late to realize that I don't have a dream at all? by Tel (2025) on the medium platform. The poet reflects how not having a dream can be seen as just survival.

Moment in Sun by Caroline Mellor (2021) on the medium platform. The poet asks readers to leave life in the present moment now, rather than be surrounded by materialistic things.

Literature Review

Hassan Rouhvand's "Author and Authorship: a Barthes-Foucauldian Plural Perspective" (2006), examines the traditional notions of author and authorship by evaluating two poststructuralist Roland Barthes (Death of Author) and Michel Foucault (Author Function) theories. On one hand Roland Barthes explains absence of author as death and gives much importance to readers when it comes to plural meanings of text whereas Michel Foucault tries to bring back the author, liberating him from text, because the author functions within social context. Foucault identifies the social context with the legal systems like ownership, authenticity, and responsibility of text. This provides a new dimension in author function as subject function irrespective of what is written rather than text function.

Yogesh Kashikar's article "A Celebration of "The Death of Author" in Roland Barthes's Essay" (2018) highlights the work of Roland Barthes article named "The Death of author". It observes that the moment when a writer starts writing the text, it seems that the writer is dead. The

author does not have any control on his/her piece of writing, it's the reader. Barthes believes that every language has its own meaning thus text is neither is not created it is just retold. He argues that assigning the value of text to an author seems like imposing a limit on that text. The way a reader decodes the meaning of the text is based on his/her personal experience is important, which is limitless. It's the imagination of the reader which makes the text more alive and justifies the meaning of the text from the author's perspective as well. Thus, multiple imaginations of readers while reading a text bring multiple meanings to the text.

Satya Prakash Prasad, Abhishek Jha & Shafaque Zehra in their research article "Blind to the Machine: Reader Response Theory in an Age of Artificially Intelligent Authors" (2024) uses reader response theory for analyzing AI created content which questions human subjectivity. Reader response theory was innovated in the mid-twentieth century by three theorists (Reader response theory, pioneered by theorists like Wolfgang Iser, Louise Rosenblatt, and Stanley Fish), in which each theorist's perspective shifts the focus from author to readers while reading any text using different mechanisms.

Wolfgang Iser's work *The Implied Reader* (1974) focuses that text contains gaps and indeterminacies which requires active attention of the reader while reading. Iser believes that reading is an ongoing process in which readers bridge the multiple perspectives of text in order to come to correct the meaning of the text based on subjective experiences such as knowledge, and imagination. Louise Rosenblatt in her work *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1978) focuses on the process of reading and addresses it as a live circuit between reader and text. Every time the reader reads the text, the reader comes up with a new meaning of the text. Stanley Fish in his work *Literature in the reader: Affective stylistics* (1970) believed that the text contains rhetorical and linguistic devices which help readers to drive meaning from the text while reading. He says that the true meaning of text is based on the reader's activity. Hence according to Fish, "It is the reader who makes literature" (p. 87).To conclude as per Reader Response theory, the literary meaning of any text can be derived or constructed using a live circuit between reader and text. Thus, the AI use in literature suggests future research scope is the need of developing a tool for analysing and evaluating literature generated by AI and adapting its qualities as well.

Hassan Rahmeh in his research article “Digitalized Briefs: Reframing The Influence Of The Digital Environment On Readers' Engagement With Flash Fiction” (2024) stresses that digital narratives are shaped by active participation of readers by sharing it with others, posting comments, critiquing, decoding the meaning of text, collaborating results into different digital narrative forms and text, which are not merely just words of author. Author at the same time on digital platforms is supported by various multimedia interference which boosts the interaction. The reason for this is accessibility, increased sense of social connectivity of readers and authors on digital narrative on digital platforms. To conclude, technological advancement highlights the evolving and adapting nature of literature and sub genres such as flash fiction.

Bente Lucht’s work "Flash Fiction - Literary fast food or a metamodern (sub)genre with potential?" (2014) observes that with the democratization of the internet, things are changing rapidly. This gives rise to various digital platforms which are highly used and create a large impact on literature. It has also paved a new way for the "dissemination of literature", resulting in "heterogeneous readership". From a literature perspective one side there are authors, various digital narratives with sub genre forms and on the other side there is patron, readership and audiences. To conclude, the horizon of various literary genres on digital platforms can be read in a short span of time. Thus, this idea of flash fiction (six word story) can be used in classrooms digitally to teach the English language. Students at the same time are able to receive feedback from their teacher.

XU Huiyan’s work “Reader-Response Approach to On-Line Collaborative Translation of Popular Literatures in China” (2014) discusses the popular text translation by readers online.
The researcher explains that use of the internet has boosted online collaboration, more specifically cross-cultural communication and reading as well. In his research paper he quoted the work of Lois Tyson who has briefed five reader response theory. The first one is Transactional reader-response theory, second is affective stylistics, third is subjective reader- response theory, fourth one is psychological reader-response theory and fifth one is social reader- response theory. The major points to note as per these reader response theories are about the reader's role when it comes to comprehend text and how readers derive the meaning of the text. The same reader can make out different meanings of text based on different occurrences. The researcher concluded that for

enhancing the text quality from the lens of translation, there should be collaboration of readers and translators.

Cagri Tugrul Mart's article "Reader-Response Theory and Literature Discussions : a Springboard for Exploring Literary Texts" (2019) discusses six different approaches for understanding any literary text by analyzing literary theories. First is a new criticism theory pioneered by Thomson,1992 which says the meaning of text is rooted within the text itself irrespective of who has written it. Second is the stylistic approach given by Pennycook, 2001focusing on the social value of text, especially in the poetry genre. Third is a language based approach by Littlewood,1986 focusing on understanding of language first which helps to comprehend literature text. Fourth is structuralism by Culler, 1982, which focuses on structure of literature. And last is the reader response approach by Dias & Hayhoe,1988 which focuses on the reader who makes their own interpretations of literary text while reading.

The researcher mainly focuses on literature discussion by using reader response theory in the classroom to teach literary text which helps students to actively comprehend text, increasing text awareness as well. He also quotes "Literature is a reservoir of concep-tions of human possibilities" (Probst, 1994 p. 37–44).

(Kuusela) Hanna Kuusela's article "Literature and Participatory Culture Online: Literary Crowdsourcing and Its Discontents" (2018) discusses reader response theory for analyzing the literary crowdsourced projects of the 21st century. He questions the literature (generated in these literary crowdsourced projects) meaningful contribution in both economic and political aspects of a country. Moreover he also states that if the answer is no then the literature generated on these platforms is in danger. The researcher quotes the words of Jenkins et al. (2006,). "the acceleration in participatory culture can be defined as low barriers of artistic expression and civic engagement" along with "social connections" 9p.7). This perspective was carried forward by Delwiche and Henderson (2012), Swiss and Burgess (2013),which highlights that the rise of the internet is the reason for increased "participation in the making of culture" (p.73). And literature crowdsourcing definitions as well. To conclude, the social value of crowdsourced literature is important but if

literature generated on these platforms doesn't contribute to society and add meaningful value, then it is seen as challenging. Thus, constructive criticism is much needed.

Muhammad Ashraf Kaloi, Shamaila Amir & Asif Ali Jamali's work "The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies Interactive Storytelling and Digital Narratives in Contemporary Literature: A Postmodern Analysis" (2025) presents a research study on postmodern norms on digital narrative and interactive storytelling in the progressively digital era. The research study emphasizes that the concept of postmodernism symbolizes plurality and significant interactive frameworks helping readers to communicate with authors, which make readers as co-authors of the digital narratives. It also shed light on how evolution in the digital world has challenged traditional straight storytelling concepts by bringing in multimedia elements such as "audio, video, animations and hyperlinks". Furthermore, the research study also traces these digital storytelling and multimedia elements in hypertext fiction, digital novels, online narratives as well, which gives readers space to control the outcome of stories resulting in giving a new direction.

The researcher also discusses the idea of decentralization of author, fragmentation and intertextuality in postmodernist literature. Postmodernism celebrates "multiplicity and subjectivity". The researcher also borrowed the words of Aarseth, 1997, to define postmodernism that it focuses on "collaboration, decentralization and deconstruction of constant meanings". The researcher narrowed down three principles of post modernism; fragmentation, intertextuality and virtual & interactive narratives. Fragmentation means text exists in parts and it's the reader who has to connect the dots in the text. Intextuality means that a text is built upon dissimilar text, resulting in creating a web of "interconnected meanings". And virtual and interactive narrative questions the authority of text. Additionally, the researcher also observes that the incorporation of digital platforms with diverse use of technology in literature helps to re-evaluate "the relationship between texts and their audiences". Thus to conclude, before integration of technology in literature, literature was seen as stability among author and reader interpretation.Readership is seen as interactive user driven content.

Tiara Saputri Darlis, Liliana Muliastuti & Eva Leiliyanti's work "The Development of Wattpad Digital Fiction Story Ideas in Response to Readers' Feedback" (2023) focuses on the Osgood and

Schramm communication model as active interaction of authors and readers on the digital platform named Wattpad. On one hand the cycle of communication begins by the author is seen as encoder and text is seen as a message. And on the other hand ideas of readers are transferred to the author the same, readers are viewed as decoder, encoder, message. The research study highlights how digital literature is refined by using two way communication among writer and reader. This is done by viewing reader response as exchanging opinion, ideas, feedback and criticism which foster the creation of the story virtually. The communication between reader and author continues until the story of the novel gets completed in stages.

Alina Ng's "When Users are Authors: Authorship in the Age of Digital Media" (2010) work argues that in a digital world where the readers are seen as co authors of literary works, the concept of authorship helps the authors to take credits of their work with the help of the copyright system. This will answer the questions of ethical concerns whenever there are collaborative uses of their literary works. Moreover, it will also help authors to promote and protect their original work from unfair means of making profit using their literary works in the digital world. The researcher quotes the words of Richard Paul & Lisa Hird Chung, Brave New Cyberworld: The Employer's Guide to the Interactive Internet, 24 Lab. Law 109 (2008), Web 2.0 which means that today's generation uses the internet as user centric & user- collaboration based internet which is different from previous web use which was just to read information.

Zoran Velagić & Damir Hasena's "Understanding textual authorship in the digital environment: lessons from historical perspectives" (2013) work tries to narrow down the concept of authorship in the digital era by studying back four historical literary periods of Statue Anne, Romanticism, 19th century (copyright) and the last is Barthes' and Foucault's critical theory about the concept of authorship. The study concludes that it is difficult to come up with any one definition of authorship because each period gives new insight to the concept of authorship.

Joy Myers's "Digital Conversations: Taking Reader Response Into the 21st Century" (2014) research study explores how the integration of Reader Response theory in literature classes help students to have more understanding of literary works. It fosters student engagement with text, their confidence in writing and increases their critical thinking. The students were asked to jot

down their understanding of text and share it for peer feedback, which helped them to improve their writing quality. The researchers conclude that this type of classroom practice can give more understanding of how to integrate and use new emerging technology in the classroom.

Florian Hartling's work "The Digital Author? Authorship in the Digital Era" (2009) explores how the acceleration of the World Wide Web explains the death of authors and readers who are seen as" writing readers." He quotes the opinion of Jay David Bolter, George P. Landow or Benjamin Woolley which is how digital media will make literary text more interactive in the early 19th century. They believe that authors will disappear, giving rise to writing readers, known as wreader. Thus the rise and use of the internet, shapes literature. This was named as Net Literature by Follmer, which means a literature which possesses few characteristics of the internet. Moreover it can also be viewed as a modern experiment of print literature. Thus to conclude, Net literature challenges the traditional norms of authorship. First by using hypertext as a sub genre which is non linear along with interactive elements. Secondly is collaborative works, where literature is not written by a single author, it can be many. Third one is control over literary text, unlike traditional authorship, the control over literary text is in the hands of the internet, its codes and software. Thus, as per internet use and norms, the concept of authorship is repeatedly kept on recreating.

Rituparna Moharana's work "The Participatory Paradigm: Digital Literature, Collaborative Writing, and Reader-Author Dynamics" (2025) explores the developing prospect of digital literature, which focuses on changing roles of author and readers. The researcher uses case studies of digital platforms Wattpad, Twine Games and Archive of Our Own, to highlight author- reader interaction, collaboration on digital platforms. This challenges traditional norms of author and readers. On these digital platforms such readers are able to interact with digital literature narrative with the help of multimedia such as visuals, hyperlinks and many more as per digital platform subjectivity. The researcher concluded that that literature is now seen as "interactive art from".(page no 764).

Plan of study

The research study consists of five chapters. The chapters are dedicated to two platforms: reddit and medium where interpretation and analysis of random selected genres will be done on both platforms. This will help in redefining authorship using technology elements.

Objective of the study

The following are research objectives of this research study;

1. The research study aims to analyze the perception of authorship on digital platforms- Medium and Reddit.
2. To study author- reader dynamics on these digital platforms, how they challenge traditional notions of authorship.
3. To explore participatory cultures for redefining digital authorship norms.
4. To theorize the concept of authorship in the digital age which accounts for decentralization of author, author-reader interactivity in the work of authors.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this research will be qualitative research which includes comparative analysis of word choice, target audience, ideology and structures of both primary sources. The primary sources consist of two texts, first one is literary text (poems and short stories on both platforms named reddit and medium), and second is the paratext as well which is upvotes, comments which are at the end of the literary text. This analysis will help in tracing the changes in the concept of authorship in the digital age. Authorship, when viewed through the lens of technology, reader response theory, has not only challenged the traditional notion of authorship but also introduced various sub genres such as hyper-text, flash fiction which reflects the adaptability of literary creativity in the 21st century on crowdsourced platforms and rise in author-reader interaction.

Scope and limitations of the study

The scope of this research study is that it will help to identify how with the help of technology, the digital interactivity of authors and readers on crowdsourced platforms influence

literary practice. The analysis of mentioned primary sources on reddit and medium platforms will help in redefining authorship using reader response theory in the digital age.

The limitations of this study is that there are many crowdsourced platforms, but the study of author and reader dynamics will be limited to reddit and medium platforms only as per timeline. Furthermore, since the author always has the option to delete his/her own work, selected primary sources may/may not be there for future verification or for reference. Lastly, the identity of authors on these platforms can be truly identified in this research since authors may use anonymous names in their profile.

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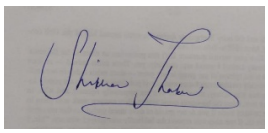
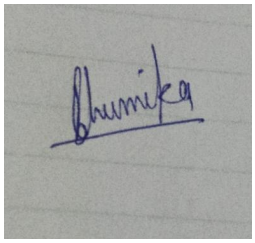


Signature of Guide



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